

## **SALT LAKE TRIBUNE**

### **Portrait conservation passes smell test**

By Judith McConkie

Roger Fitt's Public Forum letter of June 6 concerning the conservation of State Capitol art was unfortunately grounded on three errors of fact. Rather than \$23,700 representing the cost for conservation of each of the paintings, it is the total cost for portraits of the governors.

Many of the earliest portraits are in precarious condition, including slack or punctured canvases, cracking paint surfaces and damaged frames, not to mention layers of accumulated dirt and grime. The most recent portraits require no treatment whatsoever.

The recent *Tribune* story on the portraits was incorrect; a correction was printed the next day. State law requires that the process of finding the most qualified conservators for the Capitol's art be open to all interested persons, whether residing in or out of the state. Certainly, Utah-based conservators are encouraged to qualify and make proposals for the project.

The intent of the Capitol Preservation Board is not only to obtain the services of the best of the profession but also to procure those services at a price that will be a prudent expenditure of taxpayer money.

Of the three conservators who qualified to submit proposals, two were Utah-based. However, their proposals were substantially more expensive than the group of highly qualified and experienced conservators based in Denver, despite the fact that the portraits would be shipped to the Colorado workshop.

In short, I would suggest that the entire process does, indeed, pass the smell test.

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